

LESSON FOUR

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

A. GOD POSSESSES MANY ATTRIBUTES:

Attributes are defined as the characteristics and qualities of God. As water is wet and fire is hot, so God is eternal, immutable, holy, etc. These attributes are classified into two classes:

1. The Natural Attributes;
2. The Moral Attributes.

In this course of study no attempt will be made to go into a comprehensive study of the divine attributes. The Bible student should be familiar with those that are mentioned most frequently.

A distinction should be clearly made between an attribute and that which is the very essence of God. To illustrate this let us consider water. Water is H₂O, but water is wet. An attribute of water is that it is wet. However, H₂O is not an attribute. Hydrogen and Oxygen are the chemical elements, which make up water. Even so God is immutable which is an attribute, but God is Spirit which should not be considered as an attribute.

B. GOD IS OMNISCIENT:

Scriptural References:

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising thou understandest my thought afar off" (Psalm 139:2-3).

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).

Further References:

Job 11:7-8	Matthew 10:29-30
Isaiah 40:26-27	I John 3:20
Isaiah 46:9-10	Proverbs 5:21

The omniscience of God means that God is perfect in knowledge; He knows everything. He has perfect knowledge of all that will transpire among the human family and nations.

In a later lesson a study will be made of the foreknowledge of God. We must not confound the foreknowledge of God with His foreordination. The fact that God knows a thing makes that thing certain but not necessary. Man still has the responsibility for his own acts.

Also it should be noted that there is one thing that God does not know which is another God beside himself.

C. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT:

Scriptural References:

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

"I know that thou canst do anything." (Job 42:2).

The omnipotence of God means that God is perfect in power. God's power admits neither bound nor limitations.

Satan has no power over any of God's children only as God permits. God raises up a standard against Satan just as He sets a barrier to the waves of the sea (Job 1:12; Job 2:6; Luke 22:31-32).

D. GOD IS OMNIPRESENT:

Scripture References:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there" (Psalm 139:7-8).

"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24).

Further References:

Genesis 16:13

Acts 7:48

II Chronicles 2:6

Acts 17:24-28

Matthew 28:20

The omnipresence of God means that God is everywhere at all times. His center is everywhere; His circumference is nowhere.

God is never so far off as even to be near; He is within. Our spirit is the home He holds most dear. Speak to Him then, for He listens, and spirit with spirit can meet; closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

The omnipresence of God is not only a detective truth; it is also protective. (Detective to the sinner, but protective to the saint.)

E. GOD IS HOLY:

Scriptural References:

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:15-16).

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3).

"I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 41:14).

The holiness of God is the attribute with which God would have us remember Him more than any other. The visions, which God gave to Job, Moses and Isaiah, speak of God as "The Holy One."

It is because of this attribute more than others that God cannot fellowship with sinful man. It is not God's omnipotence and man's weakness, which hinders fellowship, nor yet the fact that God is perfect in knowledge and man is limited in knowledge. It is rather because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. It is because of this that God desires us to remember Him by His attribute of holiness.

The holiness of God demanded that the blood of millions of lambs, goats, bullocks, turtle doves, etc. be shed whereby man may approach unto God, in the New Testament we can only approach God through the blood of the man Christ Jesus.

The construction of the Tabernacle with its holy and most holy place into which the High Priest entered once every year with blood; the ten commandments with all their moral commands; the laws of clean and unclean animals - all speak to us of the holiness of God. God is apart from all evil and there is absolutely nothing unholy in Him. *"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5).

God hates sin and to him it is vile and detestable. The infinite distance between the sinner and God is because of sin. The sinner and God are at opposite poles of the moral universe. Herein lies the need of atonement whereby this awful distance is bridged.

We shall have right views of sin when we get right views of God's holiness. The approach to a holy God must be through the merits of Jesus Christ, and on the ground of righteousness, which is Christ's, and which in the natural we do not possess.

F. GOD IS IMMUTABLE:

Scriptural References:

"I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

The immutability of God means that God does not change. Time and change are together denied of God. There is no past, present, or future with God. Everything is one great living present. It is not possible that God should possess an attribute at one time that He does not possess at another.

G. GOD IS ETERNAL:

Scriptural References:

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

"Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God?" (Habakkuk 2:12).

The eternity of God is closely connected to that of immutability. It simply means that God dwells in eternity and time has no effect upon Him. With Him there is no past nor future but one eternal present.

"I AM" is one of the greatest titles of our Lord. The past, present, and future lie in these words. "I AM" means "The Eternally Present One; The Self-Existent One."

There is a definite relationship between the OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD and the ETERNITY OF GOD. This may be understood by considering the direct relation between SPACE and TIME. This may be worked out scientifically. Actually, God could not be omnipresent if He were not the I AM. Filling the universe with His presence He sees the past as now. How we should rejoice that our past is blotted out under the blood of Jesus. Otherwise, our sins would continuously appear as happening now in the eyes of our God.

H. GOD IS LOVE:

Scriptural References:

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (I John 4:16).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

It would appear that love is more than an attribute. It expresses the very essence of God's nature. It should be considered along with the statements "God is light" (I John 1:5), and "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). These are not just characteristics but the very essence of God's Being.

The love of God is greater than human comprehension. It is beyond measure and understanding. The love of God is of such a nature that it is extended to all men everywhere at all times. He loves every man regardless of color, nationality, and culture. He does not love the sins and habits of man but He loves the soul of man, and He constantly has the physical and spiritual welfare of man at heart.

The Cross of Calvary is the highest expression of the love of God for sinful man.

I. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND JUST:

Scriptural References:

"Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea our God is merciful." (Psalm 116:5).

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (Psalm 145:17).

The attributes of righteousness and justice are further expressions of God's holiness. In the fact that God is righteous we see His love for holiness; in the fact that He is just we see His hatred for sin. Because God is righteous there is an imposing of righteous laws and demands upon his children; because God is just there is an executing of penalties, which are attached to these laws. God always does that which is right, and His justice is free from all passion and vindictiveness. It is these attributes that demand a propitiation for sin before the sinner can be justified.

LESSON FOUR

SELF HELP TEST

Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

1. The _____ of God means that God is perfect in knowledge.
2. _____ is the attribute by which God would have us remember Him more than any other.
3. There is a relationship between the _____ of God and the Eternity of God.
4. God's power admits no bound nor _____ .
5. _____ is one of the greatest titles of our Lord.
6. The _____ of God means that God does not change.
7. _____ are defined as the characteristics of God.
8. In God there is no _____ at all.
9. God hates _____ .
10. At _____ we see the highest expression of the love of God.
11. God's _____ makes a thing certain but not necessary.
12. God's righteousness demands a _____ for sin.

List of words to choose from:

darkness	foreknowledge	Calvary
limitations	propitiation	attributes
immutability	I Am	sin
Holiness	omniscience	omnipresence

If you wish to obtain your AIS Bible and Theology Certificate or work toward your B.A. Degree from Indiana Bible College, complete this Self-Help Test as completely as possible and return it to: AIS, P.O. Box 47917 Indianapolis, IN 46247 or email it to: ais@apostolic.edu or fax it to: (317) 781-7700.